

STATE ADMINISTRATION

Exhibit No. 1Date 2-21-07Bill No. SB-502

Testimony on SB502

My name is Dan Burke, and I am president of the Montana Association for the Blind. I also work at the University of Montana's Disability Services for Students office, wherein my job duties involve ensuring accessibility to students with disabilities on campus. In 2005, I was asked by the Montana Advocacy Program (MAP) to serve on its granting committee to disburse HAVA funds from the Secretary of State's office to Montana counties with the purpose of increasing accessibility to polling places. County elections officials were expected to assess the accessibility of their polling places using the federal accessibility guidelines (minimums, really) established under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), to identify the barriers and to provide estimates of the cost of removing those barriers. Total grants approached \$0.5 million, and counties had the opportunity to receive expert assistance in how to conduct these assessments from MAP staff.

Some counties did an excellent job. Some struggled. In any case, every opportunity for counties to move closer to ensuring full, integrated and independent on the part of every citizen was offered.

Voting is an honor, a right, a privilege, a responsibility. It is all these things, and further, it is a community act, one in which Montanans with disabilities have inalienable right to participate. Please support that right by voting for SB502, in order to make our state standards for polling places equal to the task.

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